

Afghanistan Transition Initiative: Media

Sector:	Media/Civil Society
SO:	Expected to be transferred to SO 3 (Rehabilitating the Afghan nation state) in April 2005
Program Name:	Media portfolio implemented as part of the Afghanistan Transition Initiative Program
Implementer:	Ronco, VOA, Internews and IOM
Duration:	October 2001 – June 2005

The Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) will close-out the Afghanistan Transition Initiative Program in June 2005. As part of OTI's exit, the Mission's Democracy and Governance Program intends to assume management of the media portfolio in April 2005. In discussions, OTI and the DG team have identified core activities and partners for continued USAID support after the Afghanistan Transition Initiative close-out. Funds for the USAID media portfolio have been requested as part of the Supplemental budget.

Network of Radio Stations and TV



A Tolo TV Staffer reviews the financial news hosted by a female announcer. As of February 12, 2005, Tolo TV broadcasts 24 hours per day.

- Thirty-two independent FM radio stations have been established with USAID support, including 3 Arman FM commercial stations. Internews has established and provided technical assistance to community-based, women-run and student-managed university radio stations; four more stations are currently under development; In addition to technical training, sustainability and business development plans are an integral part of radio station development; nine of the community radio stations are now fully self-supporting and sustainable;
- Radio monitoring and reporting units have been established in 7 provinces to monitor media content for Afghan commercial clients and the international community;
- A commercial TV station, Tolo TV started broadcasting in Kabul on the eve of Presidential elections and is now on the air 24 hours per day.



Radio Programming and Distribution

- *Salaam Watandaar* (“Hello, My Compatriots!”), independent, national radio programming produced in Kabul, is broadcast via satellite to 34 radio stations, including a few state stations for 4 hours each day. The program emphasizes nation building and national unity. The commentators’ trademark practice of using Dari and Pashto interchangeably has proven to be very popular;
- Fifty-two percent (52%) of the Afghan population can receive this national programming via AM/FM; shortwave transmission of the programming ensures availability to 100% of Afghanistan as well as communities living in Pakistan and Iran;
- Through the *Tanin* (“echo”) network, 34 radio programs produced by NGOs, independent media outlets and USAID supported stations are distributed on CD to more than 55 radio stations and media outlets throughout the country;
- USAID funded the production of numerous public interest radio programs, include award-winning children’s programming, Emergency and Constitutional Loya Jirga programs, as well as programs highlighting civic education, women’s issues and human rights;
- Distributed 40,000 radios to vulnerable populations including rural women



Pioneering women broadcasters at Radio Sahar in Herat, one of four USAID funded, women-managed, community FM stations.

Training for Media Professionals

- USAID has supported training for almost 2,000 male and female media professionals through Afghan and international media organizations;
- The Novice Journalist Training Program (NJTP) operating in 6 Afghan universities has updated the curriculum at each of the journalism faculties, provided training for professors and hands-on radio and print journalism training for almost 400 novice journalists at the newly established university media centers;

Publications and Alternative Media

- USAID has supported two national news publications: *Killid*, a weekly magazine, and *Morsal*, a women’s monthly magazine. USAID has also



provided printing support to a Kabul daily paper and to an university printing press;

- Eight mobile cinemas showing feature and educational films about reconstruction, elections, human rights, health and mine safety have reached over one million rural Afghans;
- Community theater, art shows, films and documentaries have also raised awareness about these community issues.

Technical Assistance

- Internews and other USAID partners provided technical support in the development of Afghanistan's media broadcast law and the Election Media Code of Conduct;
- USAID has provided technical advisors to the Office of the Presidential Spokesperson to strengthen the capacity of the government of Afghanistan to engage local and international media and better communicate official messaging.

Program Highlights

Independent News Agency: Pajhwok Afghan News received its license in September 2004 and is now fully operational as an independent, Afghan news agency providing 20-25 stories per day from provinces and the capital in Dari, Pashto and English. The agency provides Afghan news from locations nationwide and markets the news service to other Afghan and international media outlets, development and diplomatic missions in Kabul, and via subscription to the Afghan Diaspora around the world. The number of Pajhwok citations by other media outlets has steadily increased – more than 60% from December to January -- to more than 420 pick-ups per month.

Afghanistan's Historic Elections in Focus:

With USAID support, 10 Afghan male and female photojournalists traveled around the country to document the historical presidential elections and the electoral process. Thirty-five images were selected from a pool of nearly 300 to create the “Elections through Afghan Eyes” exhibit. These



images illustrate the story of Afghanistan's first national democratic elections beginning with the registration process, campaigning, election day, vote counting and finally the official election results. The photojournalists captured both men and women proudly displaying their registration cards, casting votes, and working

side by side in the electoral. The exhibit was displayed simultaneously in the eight centers around the country in December 2004.

Impact of Community Radio: Founded a year ago, Radio Qarabagh represents a unique partnership with the local governing council or *shura*. The men and women of this community located in the Shomali Plains northwest of Kabul contributed over \$600 in labor and licensing fees and now own the station. Radio Qarabagh reaches over 250,000 people in the Shomali Plains and has already impacted its listeners.

The community managed station receives over 200 pieces of mail a week; everything from wedding and obituary announcements, to music and programming requests, and poetry from listeners. The station now employs 17 people, four of whom are women and broadcasts nine hours a day. A recent independent survey of the community reveals that the station is favored 3 to 1 by women and is the most popular source for information on health and provincial and local news. While a radio station in the US would require 3 years for capitalization, Radio Qarabagh has become 100% self-supporting in just 13 months due to local advertising revenue and paid programming.



The letter box for Radio Qarabagh in the bazaar. The station receives over 200 letters each week.